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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. RESOLUTION ON THE SOVIET STATE***** C. BECKETT pg. 1-2
II. THE CLASS NATURE OF THE STALINIST STATE*J. CARTER pg. 3-10a
III. FOR ULA TO REALITY*****J. BURNHAM pg. 11-25
IV. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PARTY REGIME**L. TROTSKY pg. 26-27

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The bureaucracy in the USSR is not a social class, but a caste of diverse strata. Today the specific weight of the bureaucracy has shifted far to the right from the Stalinists to the direct bourgeois stratum so that this latter force is in a position to begin to challenge openly the authority and power of the Stalinist stratum. When the counter-revolution strikes for power the bureaucracy will split, a great part going to the counter revolution, some going back to the working class.

The idea that the bureaucracy is a class, the "new" ruling class, that the USSR is a capitalist state, is a mechanical revisionist concept based on a confusion of form with content. While tremendous inroads have been made, proletarian property relations still stand. For capitalism to be re-established the property relations must be overthrown and complete private ownership and bourgeois property relations re-established. For this a civil war of gigantic proportions will be necessary (in a sense it has already begun in a prolonged, intermittent manner) although it is not excluded that the full civil war may come after the power has passed over to the counter revolution and while it is attempting to establish its control and the new property relations.

The monopoly of foreign trade, state property relations, and the glorious traditions of the October revolution are enormous factors on the side of the proletariat. The revolutionists throughout the world and especially inside the Soviet Union must exert all their energies toward the creation of a new revolutionary party, a section of the revolutionary Fourth International, independently of and against the CPSU, to work to overthrow, in the only possible way, the bureaucracy by armed mass struggle - in order to restore the USSR to the path of Socialism. To make an analysis of the SU as a workers' state warped and undermined by Stalinism without calling for a new party in the SU would be to betray our duty to the class. A new party, bold, aggressive, intransigent in line, is the need of the hour in the Soviet Union.

Marxist Policy Committee
(D. Becket)

Within the bureaucracy the differentiation proceeded along between the Stalinist elements and the direct bourgeois elements. The policies of Stalinism could only encourage and feed the petty bourgeois and bourgeois elements that had penetrated into the bureaucracy. This is all in accordance with the Soviet economy and political structure, by introducing such open bourgeois relations as partial private property and inheritance of wealth, and by the new constitution which legalized all the inroads and branches made in Soviet society and makes it easier going for the decisive overthrow of the social ownership of the means of production.

Stalinism is a new historical form of reformism within the ranks of the world labor movement, fattening upon the body of the proletarian dictatorship and on the basis of the defects of the working class internationally. Stalinism today acts as a force for weakening and undermining for confusion and betraying the proletariat and for crushing it by open counter-revolutionary terror as in Spain and China today.

THE CLASS NATURE OF THE STALINIST STATE

A Reply to the Majority Resolution and Comrade Trotsky

Is the Soviet Union a workers' state? The majority of the NAC replies in the affirmative: "...a bureaucratically degenerated workers' state".

Comrade Trotsky, in a recent contribution (Bulletin #3) supports this conclusion. In agreement with the majority he contends that the Burnham-Carter amendment is "a new attempt at revising the class theory of the state."

We maintain, on the contrary, that the position of the majority is based on a false conception of the class theory of the state, particularly the character of the workers' state; that section 18 of the majority resolution is in direct contradiction to our whole conception of the situation in the Soviet Union and our task (as outlined in the other sections of the same resolution).

Further, we believe that comrade Trotsky's defense of the conclusion of the majority (that Russia is a workers' state) is in conflict with the majority's defense of the same position.

I. The class theory of the state. It appears that we have been unable to come to agreement with the majority on the elementary question: What is the state? The majority denies that the state is a political category. The state, they tell us, is a political and economic category. This abandonment of elementary Marxism has as its purpose the defense of the view that Russia remains a workers' state though the bureaucracy has "climaxed the replacement of the political regime of the proletarian dictatorship by a Bonapartist dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy." (Bulletin #2 Pg.5). In a word, the "political state" is no longer a workers' state but the "economic state" remains a workers' state, that is, nationalized property, etc. exist.

For comrade Trotsky, however, the state is a political category. But "this very politics is concentrated economics", he adds. We agree. The majority completely misunderstands this fundamental thought, which neither identifies politics and economics nor asserts that the state, the political apparatus for coercion is also "economic" in character.

Politics is the most concentrated expression of economics, that is the meaning of the abbreviated phrase "politics is concentrated economics", which our literal minded majority comrades misinterpret.

For the majority, the class character of the state is at all times defined by the class character of the dominant property relations. For comrade Trotsky - and the minority - it is determined by the relation of the state to property relations.

"The class character of the state is determined by its relation to the forms of property in the means of production", comrade Trotsky writes. (Pg.4)

The difference is decisive for our present discussion. For the majority, the factual existence of a definite dominant form of property relations automatically stamps the existing state with its class character. The only proof that the Soviet Union is a workers' state, given

by the majority resolution, is that nationalized property exists in Russia. The entire analysis on the relation of the state to the economy in the Soviet Union is devoted exclusively to the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. (In the current NEW INTERNATIONAL, comrade Shachtman incorrectly states that the existence of bourgeois property relations in Germany proves that the Fascist state is a bourgeois state. Actually, it is necessary to prove - as can easily be done - that the Fascist state defends these property relations.)

Over an extended period of time there is a harmony between the class character of the state and economy. However, in the transformation of one economic system into another, or in the conflict between two economic systems the political power of the contending classes is not an automatic reflection of their relative strength in economy. Otherwise, revolutions and counter-revolutions would be unnecessary.

Comrade Trotsky affirms that there are periods in history in which there is a "class conflict between the economy and the state." (Pg. 3). In other words, one class has state power though the dominant economic system is hostile to its interests. These are "exceptional" periods in history, periods of revolution and counter-revolution.

To accept this view means to reject the theory of the majority on the automatic reflection of the dominant economic system in the class character of the state. It means that the question of whether Russia is a workers' state cannot be answered by mere reference to the existing property relations as the majority resolution does. The question of the class character of the Soviet State depends upon its relation to the existing property relations.

Such is the dialectic approach to the class theory of the state and the relation between politics and economics. (It would be going too far afield to show how the majority's theory, if consistently applied, would lead to a rejection of the theory of the permanent revolution which is based precisely upon the contradictions between political and economic development).

II. The workers' state. Comrade Trotsky writes that it is not accidental that we reject the view that the Soviet Union is a workers' state "in the traditional sense given to this term by Marxism". This simply means that the USSR does not correspond to the norms of a workers' state as set forth in our program." (Pg. 4)

Comrade Trotsky unfortunately misunderstands our reference to tradition. That we do not have in mind our "norm" or ideal workers' state should be clear from our phrases about the different governmental forms which a workers' state may assume, and the Soviet Union has assumed - including dictatorship of the revolutionary party and even dictatorship of the bureaucracy. For surely they are not examples of the "norm" or ideal workers' state.

For us, our use of the term workers' state to describe the bureaucratic degenerated workers' state in Russia several years ago is an integral part of the Marxist tradition. This view is neither identical with the "norm" set by Marx and Lenin nor with our present programmatic view of the workers' state. But it is, and by the nature of the case, must be in basic harmony with the "norm".

What was that conception? It was most succinctly stated by comrade Trotsky in 1931 in "Russia: Problems of Development of the U.S.S.R.":

- 8 -

"The property relations in the U.S.S.R., like the reciprocal political relations of the classes, prove incontestably that the U.S.S.R. in spite of the distortions of the Soviet regime and in spite of the disastrous policy of the Centrist bureaucracy, remains a workers' state." (Pg. 44)

Note that it is not the mere existence of nationalized property relations but this economy and "the reciprocal political relations of the classes" which establishes the Soviet Union as a workers' state.

Earlier in the same writing we read: "The recognition of the present Soviet State as a workers' state not only signifies that the bourgeoisie can conquer power in no other way than by an armed uprising but also that the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. has not forfeited the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it, of reviving the party again and of mending the regime of the dictatorship - without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform." (Pg. 36)

It is this conception of a workers' state and its significance that is valid today - but only as a conception. It not only no longer describes the present period in Russia but every phrase must be (and has been) turned into its opposite!

Here is what we say today:

- a) the bourgeoisie may conquer power without an armed uprising. (That is the significance of the Stalinist Constitution.)
- b) the proletariat has forfeited the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it; c) of reviving the party; d) of mending the regime of the dictatorship.
- e) all this requires that we must abandon the methods and road of reform and prepare for the political revolution.

To call the Soviet Union a workers' state when every feature of the significance of a workers' state no longer exists is not a break with the "norm" -- we have done this a long time ago -- but a break with our own conception of several years ago.

But is not the old conception of a workers' state outlived by new events? On the contrary, it is not the validity of the conception but its application to the present Russian state which has been outlived. No conception of the workers' state is valid which is not based upon "the political relations between the classes"; that is, the rule of the working class. For the majority, a workers' state can exist irrespective of the political relations between the classes. Comrade Trotsky's view is somewhat different though in our opinion also incorrect.

III. The present Soviet State. What is the new period which our present dispute involves? Abstractly, it is the period when the description of a workers' state put forward by comrade Trotsky in 1931 no longer applied to the real situation. It was first officially recognized in the Russian resolution of the International Conference for the Fourth International (July 29-31, 1936); the conclusions of which are discussed at greater length by comrade Trotsky in his "Revolution Betrayed".

The new period, in our opinion, marked the end of the social rule of the proletariat; the end of the workers' state, even in its bureaucratically distorted form.

The long period of reaction, on the basis of the social rule of the proletariat, had been culminated by a counter-revolution. But "only

political counter-revolution", reply the majority supporters; "were there not political revolutions and counter-revolutions in history on the basis of a bourgeois state without changing the character of the state".

These analogies - originally made by comrade Trotsky in defense of his view that Russia remains a workers' state even though a counter-revolution has taken place and a political revolution is necessary - do not hold, in our opinion.

- a) the bourgeois revolutions and counter revolutions were actions of sections of the bourgeoisie or in the interests of sections of the bourgeoisie.
- b) the victor defended bourgeois property and created conditions for its extension;
- c) the social rule of the bourgeoisie as a whole - irrespective of whether a section of it has the monopoly of political power or it is expressed through a Bonapartist regime - is maintained by its economic power, its ownership and control of the basic means of production and exchange; and its social power increases with the development of bourgeois society.

In contrast to these three features, the Stalinist counter-revolution:

- a) was not the work of a section of the proletariat or in the interests of a section of the proletariat.
- b) the victor, has created the political conditions, for the destruction of nationalized property relations.
- c) the social rule of the proletariat, which is not and cannot be a propertied class, depends upon its political relations with other classes, which may be strengthened by the dominance of nationalized property over capitalist elements of economy in the given society. Its social rule (and its political power) however does not develop in automatic ratio to the development of nationalized property; otherwise we would have to conclude that the Russian proletariat today has greater social and political power than at any time in Soviet history!

What were the "reciprocal political relations between the classes" yesterday and what are they today? In 1931 comrade Trotsky wrote that Left turns of the Stalinist apparatus "occurs above all under pressure of the amorphous, loose, but still powerful elements of the revolutionary party. The strength of this factor cannot be expressed in figures. At all events, it is today powerful enough to support the structure of the dictatorship of the proletariat." ("Russia: Problems of Development of the U.S.S.R." Pg.35)

At that time we spoke of "elements of dual power" in the Soviet Union. Today, "these powerful elements of the revolutionary party" have been destroyed; the counter-revolution of course has not completed its job even in the political field. No revolution or counter-revolution completes its job simultaneous with seizing state power.

Proletarian political and social power has been destroyed. But what class has triumphed? What is the class character of the Soviet Union? We agree with comrade Trotsky that to speak of the Soviet Union as a classless state is absurd. The Russian developments do not call for an abandonment of the Marxist theory of the state. It is in the application of the theory that differences arise.

What are the classes in the Soviet Union? Or is the working class the only class in the Soviet Union as the Stalinists contend? In the

interests of which class does the state (in which is included the bureaucracy, the army, the GPU, the concentration camps, etc.) function? What property relations does the state seek to establish?

In bourgeois society, we speak of two fundamental economic classes as defined by their group relations to production, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This is obviously not the fundamental division in Soviet society. The state bureaucracy which "controls" the means of production is not a possessing class. However, do the managers of trusts, foremen in factories, highly skilled technicians, etc., form an economic class or are they mere political parasites on the body of economy?

In bourgeois society, those occupying similar positions in economy are part of the bourgeoisie. They are economic agents of capitalists of a different economic and social category than the proletariat. Their income is based not primarily upon stock ownership but rather comes from fixed large salaries and bonuses - part of the capitalist profits.

In the Soviet Union they form a class closely interlinked with the state bureaucracy. In its economic policies the state represents their interests and aspirations; the interests and aspirations of the state bureaucracy - itself not a class - become more and more merged with these interests. Fundamentally it spells destruction of the nationalized property relations by the creation of a new bourgeoisie which would emerge from the present managers, foremen, skilled technicians, as well as from the state bureaucracy itself.

Other privileged strata - well to do collective peasants, Stakhanovites and professionals - act as necessary social supports for the activities and aspirations of the bureaucracy.

But are not these managers, etc. at the mercy of the bureaucracy? Many of them are being killed! Such a reply sounds strange from those who contend that the working class is the ruling class at a time when its best representatives have been killed or exiled!

The Stalinist State seeks to destroy the "socio-economic foundation" of a workers' state in Russia; seeks to develop a new class, the bourgeoisie, now existing only in embryonic form.

In this sense, we have in Russia not only a "bourgeois bureaucracy", (Trotsky) but also a "bourgeois state". Then why not call it a bourgeois state? Because "In our analysis, we have above all avoided doing violence to dynamic social (and political) formations which had no precedent and have no analogies." (Trotsky, Revolution Betrayed, Pg. 255). We believe these words of Trotsky (used to explain why he cannot find a simple, meaningful phrase to characterize the social character of Soviet society as a whole) as applied to the present Stalinist state.

We therefore reject the dilemma "workers' state or bourgeois state" without denying that the Stalinist state has a class character as defined above. To call it a bourgeois state is to employ an old phrase to describe a new, transitory phenomena and obscures rather than clarifies our position.

But does not Marxist theory demand that it be called either a workers' or bourgeois state? Nothing of the kind. In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx emphasized the political independence of Bonaparte from the bourgeoisie; that Bonapartism is not the (political) rule of the bourgeoisie; (but rather of the conservative peasantry); and though

he shows that bourgeois society, now freed from political cares, is thus able to make great strides forward, he does not call it a "bourgeois state!"

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But does the Stalinist state defend nationalized property relations? If it does, then why is it not a workers' state, in this sense? That is how comrade Trotsky poses the question in his article. And in answering the question in the affirmative, asserts that therefore the working class is the ruling class.

resolution

First, it should be noted that the majority does not base its case for the working class character of the Soviet State on the relation of this state towards the nationalized property relations. The majority does assert that: "the social content of the bureaucratic dictatorship is still determined by the economic structure and the productive relations created by the October revolution" but this is not presented in connection with any "dual role" of Stalinism. As a matter of fact, the bureaucracy is not merely "the product of political and social reaction" (as the majority asserts in section 18 of its resolution) but more significantly, is the product of the political counter-revolution as well. Its social content is not determined by the existing property relations, but is temporarily limited or conditioned by these property relations which it seeks to destroy.

Be that as it may, the majority resolution does not speak of the dual character of Stalinism. Comrade Trotsky on the other hand does: "The function of Stalin, like the function of Green, has a dual character. Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot defend the bureaucracy other than by defending that social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests. To that extent does Stalin defend nationalized property from imperialist attacks and from the too impatient and avaricious layers of this very bureaucracy." (Pg.5). In other words to that extent, the Stalinist State is a workers' state.

If it is true that Stalin "cannot defend the bureaucracy other than by defending that social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests", then how can we characterize the Stalinist constitution as comrade Trotsky does: "By juridically reinforcing the absolutism of an 'extra-class' bureaucracy, the new constitution creates the political premises for the birth of a new possessing class." ("The Revolution Betrayed" Pg.272) If Stalin can defend himself and the bureaucracy only by defending nationalized property relations how can we say, as the majority resolution does, that the political counter-revolution "has been carried through by the Stalinist bureaucracy with the deliberate purpose of creating all the political preconditions for a fundamental assault upon the economic basis of the workers' state, namely, the nationalization of the means of production and exchange."? (Pg.7)

In other words, we hold that it is incorrect to say that the Stalinist State must defend nationalized property relations in order to defend itself (This was true at an earlier period). More precisely, the Stalinist State may defend the social foundations established by the proletarian revolution against imperialist attack. Its chief function, however, is not such defense; it is rather the destruction of these foundations so that the privileged strata can develop into a new propertied class, the new bourgeoisie.

As against fascist destruction of these relations - which spells the destruction of the present bureaucracy - the Stalinist State has its own methods of counter-revolution which will benefit the privileged strata of Soviet society. However, even in case of war, or rather precisely in case of war, the probability is overwhelming that the state will attempt to destroy the social foundations of Russia with the aid of its own war allies.

If Stalinism does defend nationalized property relations against imperialist intervention, we will support it in this struggle, while carrying on the political struggle for its overthrow. This however does not mean that the Stalinist State (the bureaucracy, Red Army, GPU, Concentration camps, etc.) are expressions of the rule of the working class.

When we assert that the proletariat has been politically expropriated, as the majority, minority and comrade Trotsky do, this does not merely mean that the proletariat no longer has direct political power - for that is not new, but has been the condition in Russia for many years. If it has any significance at all in describing the new situation, it means that the proletariat is no longer the ruling class; its social power, which was expressed in many different indirect ways in influencing the policies of the state (that is indirect political power) has been destroyed. Otherwise, I repeat, the assertion that the proletariat has been politically expropriated does not describe the new situation.

That defense of nationalized property relations does not make the Stalinist state a workers' state should be clear from the following sentence of Comrade Trotsky: "Should a bourgeois counter-revolution succeed in Russia, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon nationalized economy." (Pg. 3). The bourgeois counter-revolution would also defend its nationalized economy against destruction by another bourgeois power. Would we have a workers' state in Russia?

For the majority, with its automatic conception of the relation between politics and economics, such a bourgeois counter-revolution is impossible. It is in complete contradiction to the theory of the majority. We do not wish to enter into the question of the probability of such a development; (1) The Russian managers, specialists, etc. would participate as "compradores" in the exploiting process. The state bureaucracy would assure centralized control of production and receive material benefits for this service.

But how does this possibility, which comrade Trotsky poses in a probable sense "for a lengthy period of time", jibe with either the majority viewpoint on the relation of politics and economics or comrade Trotsky's view that the working class is the ruling class in Russia (that a workers' state exists) because the state temporarily, as against its basic function, defends nationalized relations against foreign imperialists or impatient bureaucrats?

Then why defend the Soviet Union? Comrade Trotsky writes against us;

"It is very good that comrades B. and C., in distinction from our French comrade Craipeaux and others, do not forget the factor of the productive forces and do not deny defense to the Soviet Union. But this is completely insufficient. And what if the criminal leadership of the bureaucracy should paralyze the growth in economy? Can it be possible that comrades B. and C. in such a case will passively allow imperialism to destroy the social bases of the USSR? We are sure that this is not the case. However, their non-Marxist definition of the USSR as neither a workers' nor a bourgeois state opens the door for all kinds of conclusions. That is why this definition must be categorically rejected" (Pg. 8)

We could agree with comrade Trotsky if our case for the defense of the Soviet Union rested on the higher development of Russian productive forces than the productive forces in the imperialist countries. (Just as the productive forces of China are inferior to that of Japan or that of Ethiopia, far inferior to Italy).

Our criterion is that of the most favorable economic and political conditions for the development of productive forces. In case of Ethiopia and China they are in the first instance political conditions. In the case of the Soviet Union they are political and economic. The politics of Stalinism endangers the economy and threatens the further development of productive forces. The success of foreign intervention would mean the

creation of political conditions in Russia which would be fetters on the development of productive forces, and would destroy these forms of economy (nationalized production, planned economy, etc.) which are the economic conditions for the most favorable and speediest development of productive forces.

In a word, just as national or colonial wars are progressive (and are supported by revolutionists) primarily because they strive to remove the political fetters on the development of productive forces, so the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist intervention is above all a defense of economic conditions most favorable to the development of Russian productive forces. (The defense is inseparable from the struggle for the most favorable political forms for the development of these forces, which means a struggle against Stalinism and foreign imperialism).

If Stalinism "should paralyze the growth in economy" this does not affect the problem of the superiority of the present Soviet form of economy to capitalist economy; it will indicate that the present Stalinist state, in a word, present Soviet politics, is an absolute obstacle to further economic development. It will therefore not change our attitude toward the economy, that is, our attitude toward the defense of the Soviet Union.

Our references to the disintegrating features in Russian economy are intended to show that its progressive role in economy has been exhausted. This does not mean that further Russian economic development has come to an absolute halt under Stalinism, but rather that its role in economy today is qualitatively different from what it was during the first five year plan, for example. Economic disorder, dislocation and crisis are now the rule rather than the exception. However, I repeat, this reflects on the function and role of the Stalinist State (on the social character of the state) not on the social significance or value of the economic forms established by the Russian Revolution. Even if paralyzed they must be defended from bureaucratic strangulation and Stalinist or imperialist destruction.

In summary:

1. The class theory of the state is not defined by the existing dominant production (as the majority contends) but rather by the relation of the state toward property relations.

2. By workers' state we mean the social rule of the proletariat having as its aim the development towards socialist society. The state may assume different political forms (direct political rule through participation of proletariat in state administration, etc. with broad democratic rights for the masses, the right of competing workers' parties, etc., dictatorship of the revolutionary party, in which the proletariat participates in state administration but its political rights are limited, competing parties are seriously curtailed or eliminated, etc.; dictatorship of the bureaucracy, under which the social power of the proletariat is expressed indirectly through the pressure of revolutionary traditions within the bureaucracy and among the masses and revolutionary events outside of Russia - resulting in the bureaucracy's constant return to a "left" course), that is, to defense and development of nationalized property relations).

3. The present Stalinist State (a) does not represent the social or political rule of the working class but rather the privileged strata of Soviet society (above all, the interests and aspirations of the managers of the trusts, specialists, etc. which coincide with those of the state bureaucracy); this strata is not yet a bourgeois class owning the means of production but strives to convert itself into such a class. (b) The Stalinist State defends nationalized property against those who, by different methods and for different aims, seek to destroy it.

(impatient bureaucrats, foreign imperialists). The Russian and international proletariat should defend the nationalized property relations (against Stalinism and the impatient bureaucrats and the foreign imperialists) because they are the most fertile basis for the reconstruction of the workers' state by the political overthrow of the Stalinist State; their destruction by Stalinism or the foreign imperialists would destroy the last conquest of the Russian Revolution, reduce Russia to a Fascist semi-colony and strengthen world reaction.

(c) The Stalinist State has prepared the political preconditions for the destruction of the social foundations established by the proletarian revolution (purges, constitution, etc.).

(d) Particularly in case of war the probability is overwhelming that the Soviet State, with the aid of its imperialist allies, will attempt to extend its counter-revolution from the political to the social sphere.

(e) The Russian and world proletariat should give material support to the Stalinist State in its struggle against foreign intervention. Such support must be inseparable from the political struggle against Stalinism with the aim of winning the Russian working class for the political revolution against it.

(f) If the Stalinist State is engaged in a reactionary, imperialist war revolutionists cannot support the Red Army in such a war but their tactics must take into consideration the imperative need of the defense of the existing property relations which are immediately endangered by the reactionary war itself.

4. We must abandon the use of the phrase workers' state to describe the present Stalinist State. The Marxist theory of the state and particularly of the workers' state calls for such revision in our terminology: a revision which would give a greater inner consistency and effectiveness to our revolutionary program and practice.

December, 1937

JOSEPH CARTER

OMMISSIONS

(1) it suffices to say that such a development is not excluded. The French, English or American bourgeoisie would be the real ruling class in Russia.

(2) But such is not and cannot be our criterion: the actual state of Russian productive forces is far below the advanced capitalist countries.

FROM FORMULA TO REALITY

Notes on the Nature of the Soviet State

"Doctrinaires will doubtless not be satisfied with this hypothetical definition. They would like categorical formulae: yes--yes, and no--no. Sociological problems would certainly be simpler, if social phenomena had always a finished character. There is nothing more dangerous, however, than to throw out of reality, for the sake of logical completeness, elements which today violate your scheme and tomorrow may wholly overturn it. In our analysis, we have all avoided doing violence to dynamic social formations which have had no precedent and have no analogies. The scientific task, as well as the political, is not to give a finished definition to an unfinished process, but to follow all its stages, separate its progressive from its reactionary tendencies, expose their mutual relations, foresee possible variants of development, and find in this foresight a basis for action." (Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed.)

Some Puzzling Omissions...

It is instructive to notice how much is omitted from the resolution of the Committee majority (Gannon-Abern) on the Russian Question. For example:

1. Nowhere does the resolution state flatly and unambiguously: "In the Soviet Union, the proletariat is the ruling class."

2. Nowhere does the resolution declare itself on the problem of the "dual" or "single" character of the bureaucracy. This problem cannot be dismissed as a trifle. All historical institutions, of course, have in a certain formal sense a "dual" role: even the bourgeois state, even employers, act occasionally, "by accident", in the interests of the proletariat. But for the purposes of action, in order to establish our policies and perspectives, we sum up the character of each institution taken as a whole, defining it as on the whole "progressive" or "reactionary", or in certain unusual cases as "dual". Thus we say that the bourgeois state is in the present epoch reactionary, and we do not support it. We say that the struggle of the Loyalists against Franco, in spite of numerous reactionary features (if we were abstracting out separate elements), is on the whole, or rather taken as a whole progressive, and we have supported it. In the first years of the Russian Revolution, we said that the regime was unambiguously progressive. Then, for many years, we have said that it had a dual character: and we advocated defense of the Soviet Union and the revolution, but political struggle against the bureaucracy. Does the bureaucratic regime, does Stalinism that is to say, today preserve that dual character, taken as a whole; or has it lost that dual character and become, taken as a whole, reactionary? The Resolution gives no answer.

3. Nowhere does the Resolution characterize unequivocally, or even mention seriously, the foreign policy of Stalinism, the social role of Stalinism and its institutions outside of the boundaries of the Soviet Union.

4. Nowhere does the Resolution declare itself with reference to the possibility of the completion of the counter-revolution within the Soviet Union without a wide-spread, mass Civil War.

We have observed before that slogans and formulas, divorced from specific content, are meaningless. Merely repeating "Peace, Bread and Land" did not make the French Stalinists Bolsheviks a few years ago. The Committee majority is concerned for the formula, "Workers' State". But the omissions reveal strikingly the lack of specific content which this formula possesses for them. Why these omissions?

In the first place, behind the back of the formula there is concealed a complete lack of agreement among the supporters of the Resolution. This came rapidly to the surface in the membership discussion. Comrades Cannon and Abern declared that Stalinism has still a dual role; comrades Weber and Shachtman that it has now a single - i.e., reactionary, counter-revolutionary role. Shachtman, Abern, Cannon, declare that Stalinism outside of foreign boundaries has exactly the same social role as internally; Weber (and now comrade Trotsky), that externally (as in Spain) Stalinism has now a purely counter-revolutionary role, and act solely in the interests of the bourgeoisie; comrade Trotsky making an explicit distinction between its role in Spain and its role internally. Abern ruled out the possibility of a completion of the internal counter-revolution without a mass civil war; Weber admits that possibility; Shachtman, and so far as I can gather Trotsky, do not declare themselves explicitly. Certain supporters of the Committee majority - i.e., Morrow - say that the conception of a "ruling class" has nothing to do with the conception of a "state"; others say that a "workers' state" means one in which the proletariat is the ruling class.

In the second place, these omissions serve to give the Resolution a false character in the eyes of the membership. The Resolution professes to declare that something "new" has occurred within the Soviet Union during the past two or three years, and that we must therefore make a new analysis, or rather extend our previous analysis to cover the new phenomena. This profession is even more urgently made in Shachtman's article in the NEW INTERNATIONAL. But in reality, the retention of the formula, "workers' state", prevents anything new in our analysis, prevents any extension to cover the undoubtedly new phenomena, and results, if consistently carried through, in simply a re-statement of our old analysis with no change whatever. This is recognized by comrade Victor Fox. His statement in Bulletin #2 is a careful and exact formulation of what follows from the retention of the formula "workers' state". The Committee majority insists that it does not accept Fox's statement. But in the discussion they have not pointed out a single reason for not accepting it; and they have made absolutely no criticism of it, save for one passing literary criticism of a single phrase made by Cannon. Thus, the Resolution is demagogic: it pretends to be what it is not, and recommends itself to the membership under false colors. Let Fox demand from the Committee majority an explanation of their rejection of his statement. So far they have given none. If they cannot give a political motivation, their rejection must be understood as merely bureaucratic, or at the best stylistic. And they cannot give a political motivation.

Thirdly, the omissions must be understood as hiding the contradictions within the position of the Committee majority, and the inadequacy of its formulas for handling the present reality. These contradictions I shall develop more at length in what follows.

And Disturbing Contradictions

I have already cited certain of the contradictions among the supporters of the Resolution on key specific problems. There are, however, other contradictions not only among various interpretations, but inherent to the position itself. For example, it is contended by Abern and Sterling that we give unconditional support to the Soviet Union and to the Red Army under any and all circumstances; and Cannon has also expressed agreement with this view. So long as we believe that the Soviet Union is a workers' state, this view is altogether plausible. If it is a workers' state, the possibility of its engaging in a reactionary war is not realistic and does not have to be taken into account. But the past year and a half have made clear that there is a very real possibility that the Soviet Union and the Red Army may engage in a reactionary war: for example, as part of a "League Army" to liquidate the Spanish Civil War, or in China - indeed, this possibility was nearly realized, and may yet be. In such a war, do we defend and support the Soviet Union and the Red Army? Cannon, Abern, and Sterling have said Yes. But I do not believe they have thought the problem out. Of course we do not support them under such circumstances; to do so would be to support the counter-revolution. Shachtman understands this and recognizes such a possibility, though rightly pointing out that it is less probable than an imperialist attack on the Soviet Union. However, his understanding and recognition are incompatible with his alleged view that the Soviet Union remains a workers' state. Shachtman's inconsistency in this instance enables him to draw a correct political conclusion; Cannon, Abern and Sterling are consistent, and wrong.

If the Soviet Union is still a workers' state, the possibility of the restoration of private property without a mass civil war is excluded, at least if we still retain our traditional teachings on the nature of revolutions. During the last several years, however, our movement has widely recognized that the restoration might be accomplished without mass civil war (though not without a certain amount of violence - indeed, there has been plenty of violence during this period); and it is clear on the surface of events that it might be. But this recognition is in actuality a recognition that the Soviet State is no longer a workers' state. The state - that is, the organs and institutions of coercion in society, the army, police, GPU, courts, prisons, bureaucracy; and even the juridical basis of the state as provided in the New Constitution (the de jure locus of sovereignty in the new Parliaments) - does not have to be overthrown in order to accomplish the full social and economic counter-revolution. (It does not have to be, though in point of fact it might be, dependent upon the specific developments.) On the other hand, it is by now clear that the getting rid of Stalinism, what we call "the political revolution" (what is in truth the re-establishment of the class rule of the proletariat) does in all probability require precisely not the mere "reform" of the bureaucracy, not simply a "change of government", but the overthrow of the present state and its organs and institutions, the abolition of the bureaucracy, the creation of a new "army of the people", the destruction of the GPU, the abolition of the New Constitution and its juridical provisions. The "political revolution" will create a dual power counter to the present state power, perhaps under slogans of "All Power back to the Soviets", and will achieve victory through the transfer of power. What does all this mean, what can it mean, of the political revolution which we advocate,

except that this political revolution involves a change in class rule, not merely a change in the form of rule by the same class (which is what we advocated up to a few years ago)? If the Soviet Union is still a workers' state, if, that is to say, the working class is still the ruling class within the Soviet Union, then our policies, the program we advocate for the Soviet Union, is entirely unjustifiable; and we must return to our policies and program of four or five years ago. Here again, comrade Fox's statement is enlightening, for Fox is consistent. It is altogether clear from a careful reading of his statement that he cannot really accept our present policy of "political revolution".

The contradictions are even more glaring in connection with the question of the social role of Stalinism outside of the Soviet Union. It is, I have always understood, an elementary tenet of Marxism that the social role of a class or a state is basically the same nationally and internationally. There may, of course, be accidental or temporary deviations from this rule; but in crises and over any considerable period of time it emerges clearly. For many years we have criticized the Lovestonites on exactly this point; we have said that their distinction between the internal role of the Stalinist bureaucracy (progressive and praise-worthy) and its external role (reactionary and disruptive) is not only a direct violation of Marxism, but makes it altogether impossible to explain either Stalinism or the Soviet Union, or to hold a correct policy with reference to them.

I found rather startling the casual and as if incidental manner in which comrade Trotsky brushed aside this doctrine and this method of analysis. After explaining the internal role of the bureaucracy as dual and as in one aspect genuinely defending the interests of the proletariat; and after insisting that within the Soviet Union the proletariat is still the ruling class and the state a workers' state; he suddenly writes: "The same Stalin in Spain, i.e., on the soil of a bourgeois regime, executes the function of Hitler" (which function he has just defined as defending exclusively the bourgeois forms of property). If the thesis itself is startling (involving the conception that Stalinism in Spain has a completely different social role, expresses completely different class interests, from Stalinism within the Soviet Union), the suggested explanation - nowhere any further developed - is even more so. "I.e., on the soil of a bourgeois regime..." But Stalinism, even Stalinism in Spain, is surely not a "Spanish phenomenon". Stalinism, in Spain as in the Soviet Union, and in every other country, springs, we have always taught, from the soil of - the Soviet Union, where among other features, nationalized property relations and the monopoly of foreign trade still obtain. It is because these property relations do not any longer constitute the Soviet Union a workers' state, because they accompany a state which is not a workers' state, because the proletariat is not any longer the ruling class within the Soviet Union, that Stalinism is able to and does play its current role in Spain. No other consistent explanation can be given for Stalinism in Spain. To say that the bureaucracy within the Soviet Union expresses - even if in distorted manner - the interests of the proletariat, but in Spain only and univocally the interests of the bourgeoisie, is if carried to a conclusion to deny the class analysis of social phenomena. You cannot have it both ways. The fundamental class role of Stalinism must be understood as identical in Spain and in the Soviet Union, whatever modifications we may have to make in the form it takes as conditioned by the particular and local conditions.

Again: Shachtman, in his NEW INTERNATIONAL article, states and repeats, always in italics: "the victory of the Stalinist bureaucracy marks the victory of a political counter-revolution". The majority spokesmen, including comrade Trotsky, grant us that the state is a "political category". What then can the definitive victory of a political counter-revolution (and we entirely agree that this has taken place) signify? Is Shachtman just playing with words? It can only mean - is it not sufficiently obvious - that the class which once held the state power, the political power (it is not a question here of the "form of government" which is quite a different matter: political power need not shift with a change in the form of government) no longer holds it, as applied to the Soviet Union, that the working class, which once ruled, even if in a distorted manner, no longer rules. Shachtman directly refutes himself.

Light is thrown upon Shachtman's contention (not at all shared by all supporters of the Resolution) by recalling a discussion in the National Committee during the time of the formulation of the Resolution. In a long and in fact impassioned speech, Shachtman defended the thesis that what was new in the present situation in the Soviet Union was that "the dictatorship of the proletariat has been overthrown, liquidated, one hundred per cent destroyed; but that the workers' state, in the sense of the nationalized production, remained". He explained that by "workers' state", he meant merely nationalized production. However awkward this formulation, it was a commendable attempt to expand and dissociate old formulas in such a manner as to make them more suitable for handling present realities. But chastening remarks from Cannon, Abern, and others - who in point of fact do not really agree, not simply with Shachtman's formulations, but with Shachtman's views - persuaded Shachtman to withdraw into his present self-contradictory presentation.

The Argument of the Majority and the Copernican Circles

What is the argument of the Committee majority, reduced to its simplest and essential form? We ask them, What kind of state is the Soviet Union? They answer, It is a workers' state. We ask, Why is it a workers' state? They answer, Because there is nationalized property. We ask, Why does nationalized property make it a workers' state? And they answer, Because a workers' state is one where there is nationalized property.

This is, in form, exactly the same argument used by those who tell us that the Bible is the Word of God. We ask them, How do you know it is the Word of God? They answer, Because the Bible itself says that it is the Word of God. We ask, But how does that prove it to be true? and they answer, Because nothing that God said could be a lie.

In both instances, the conclusion has been taken for granted in the premises; the argument is entirely circular, and can prove nothing whatever. At best, it is a definition that the Majority offers us; but it gives no proof that this definition is of the slightest use as a tool in solving our theoretical or practical problems.

The point in dispute is just that point which the Majority takes for granted without proof or argument or evidence. The point is, is it a fact that nationalized production of and by itself makes a

state a workers' state, guarantees the class rule of the workers, assures the transition to socialism. (The point in dispute is not at all whether nationalized production is a necessary aspect of a workers' state, which, except for temporary exceptions, no one in the least argues; merely whether it is also a sufficient aspect).

Now what the last twenty years, in particular the past two or three years, have taught us, if we wish to be taught, is exactly that nationalized production of and by itself does not make a workers' state, does not guarantee the class rule of the workers, does not assure the transition to socialism. For these things there is a political as well as a social-economic pre-condition. If this conclusion disturbs us, if it seems to disagree with our earlier expectations and predictions, then we must revise, re-adapt or extend these expectations and predictions, and not try to escape facts by explaining them away. Naturalists once proved that all swans are white; but black swans were nevertheless discovered in New Zealand.

When Copernicus revolutionized Ptolemaic astronomy by postulating the sun instead of the earth as the fixed reference point for astronomical calculation, he still retained the older theory that the planets had circular orbits. This was thought to follow from the perfection of God, who would never have been the cause of any motion but perfect motion, which was held to be motion in a circle. On this theory, Copernicus was able to explain all of the observed phenomena, but he did so only at the cost of a most cumbersome and awkward mathematical process. Kepler showed that postulated elliptical motions for the planetary orbits made the mathematics enormously simpler, and besides suggested new and fruitful hypotheses for explaining additional phenomena and making additional predictions. (Of course, Kepler also explained that God's perfection could quite consistently express itself in an ellipse.)

The Majority clings to its circle, its definition. And any definition can, if stretched wilfully enough, serve. But when it goes beyond a certain point, it becomes so cumbersome, so awkward, so out of accord with what men ordinarily understand by language, that, instead of being an instrument for the communication of truths and the illumination of events, it acts to obscure and confuse us and others. And this is just what has happened in the definition of the Soviet Union as "a workers' state" (for by now it is little more any longer than a question of definition); this definition is now an instrument for hiding reality, for confusing meanings, for obscuring events; and it is time to drop it.

"Proletarian Economy"

The Majority Discovers a Theoretical Topsy

In attempting to defend their view by argument (an altogether fruitless attempt, since it, the only argument is the purely circular one just discussed), the spokesmen of the Majority have suddenly discovered that there is a "proletarian economy", comparable to feudal, bourgeois, and socialist economy. Like Topsy, this concept must have "just grown", for there is no slightest indication of its parentage in events, Marxism, or in science generally.

In the Soviet Union, they tell us, there is a "proletarian economy"; and since the state "expresses" the economy, it is therefore a proletarian or workers' state.

If this doctrine becomes publicly known, it will certainly be an unusual surprise for the Stalkinist theoreticians. For many years we told them that they couldn't build socialism in a single country, or even maintain a workers' regime indefinitely in a single country, for the precise reason that there is no proletarian economy or society or culture. There is simply an intermediary transitional economy, society and culture, partaking mixedly of the natures of capitalist and socialist economy, society and culture, but administered in the direction of socialism by the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the political rule of the working class (as Marx himself explained it).

It would be no less surprising to Marx, who devoted his entire life, and almost all of his major theoretic work (Capital itself) to proving that there could not be a proletarian economy; but that bourgeois economy would be and would have to be replaced by socialist economy.

It is true that all workers' states will take certain similar economic measures - e.g., the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in one after another of the realms of the economy (or of all realms at once), and the nationalization of these realms - in order to assure the continuance of proletarian domination and the transition to socialism. But it is absolutely false that this constitutes a distinctive economy, which involves distinctive property rights held by the members of a distinctive class. This is just what distinguishes the rule of the proletariat from the rule of all other classes in history. The proletariat takes power not to establish a new economic regime, a new system of property rights, for itself as a class, but, by progressive steps starting with the expropriation and nationalization of the key productive industries, to do away with property rights altogether. There is no distinctive "proletarian" property right. If there is, Marxism in its entirety, in its theory and its politics, is completely wrong.

This has an enormous importance in our understanding of the nature of the state. The state is not identical with the economy; to think so, as do some of the spokesmen of the Majority, is the most vulgar sort of monism. If it were, there would be no need for a theory of the state, since the theory of economy would in advance have covered the theory of the state. But the theory of the state is probably the key theory of Marxism; and reformism has almost always developed by keeping hold of Marxian economics (sometimes in very orthodox form) but denying the related but not identical theory of the state.

Within any social system, the "state" refers to the organs and institutions of social and political coercion, the army, police, courts, prisons, bureaucracy. The theory of the state asserts that these organs and institutions will on the whole and in general be used as instruments to aid the interests of those who occupy the dominating social position in terms of the economy, of property rights. The proof of this theory is not a matter of definition, but of evidence; namely, to show how this actually happens in various social systems (Guérin's brilliant book on Fascism, for example, abounds with concrete evidence showing how the Fascist states in Germany and Italy do in point of fact uphold the interests of those who occupy the dominating social

position in terms of the economy - namely, the bourgeoisie; showing, among other things, the superficiality of the view that fascism involves the "political expropriation" of the bourgeoisie).

In a feudal society, the property relations serve the interests of those who have the chief property rights, namely the feudal lords, and assure class domination by the feudal lords. The organs of the state (in considerable part manned by the feudal lords themselves), so long as they defend those property relations, whatever form the state organs take, thus do actually serve as the instrument of the feudal lords as a class, do defend their interests and their domination.

The interests and domination of the bourgeoisie in society is assured whenever the members of the bourgeoisie hold in their persons, directly or indirectly, the decisive property rights in the instruments of production. The state can take many forms (monarchy, parliamentary democracy, personal dictatorship, fascism), and be peopled governmentally by various strata of society; but while it defends and protects bourgeois property rights it is by that act defending and protecting those who hold the rights, since those rights are what serve the interests of the ones who hold them, are what assured their general social rule and domination as a class. This follows not because of any mystical identification of the state with the economy. Nor is the state defending a mere abstraction, a "system of property relations". It defends the interests of a given group of persons, a given class rule and domination; and the concrete property rights are merely the method by which those interests and that class rule are assured. We prove this not by definition, but by examining the facts. And up to the present the facts, even in the case of fascism, bear out our predictions and analyses.

There is no direct analogy in the proletarian dictatorship. Under capitalism the proletariat has no property rights (in the instruments of production). Neither does it have such rights under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is the state, not the workers, which has the property rights. Therefore, the supreme question becomes, Whose state is it? Whose interests does it express? For whom and against whom does it function?

The bourgeoisie, so long as its property rights are intact, is guaranteed class domination. Not so the proletariat; for it has no property rights. It can assert its class domination only through the state; and therefore if it loses the state, if the state no longer expresses its interests, if the state functions primarily against it and not against the class enemy, this means that the proletariat is no longer the ruling class, it means that its class domination has been destroyed.

And this is just what has happened in the Soviet Union. Under Stalin, for many years, the state was undermining the class domination of the workers; it was, as we said, a degenerated workers' state. Within the last two or three years, it has completed that divorce from the proletariat; and, consequently, the state is no longer a workers' state. Twenty years ago, perhaps, we would have thought this impossible without the prior destruction of nationalized economy. History teaches us. It shows us that the class rule of the proletariat can indeed take a number of forms - free soviets, many parties, one party, bureaucratic distortion, bureaucratic dictatorship, and perhaps others we do not yet know. But it shows us also that the nationalized economy can remain

And the rule of the workers be destroyed. How else, possibly, can we describe and explain what has happened?

The doctrine of a "proletarian economy" leads, if carried out, to many most ludicrous conclusions. Comrade Trotsky nowhere states this doctrine. But Trotsky also in the present article (though not at all in previous years, when he defined the significance of the term "workers state" in quite a different manner) treats the nationalized economy as the sole and sufficient criterion of a workers state. He makes nationalized economy equal to and identical in meaning with "workers' state"; and this is in substance the doctrine of a "proletarian economy".

But Trotsky must at once modify his own doctrine. The workers' state existed from November, 1917 on, though economy was not nationalized until later. How, then, did you know at the time (not looking backward after economy had been nationalized) that it was a workers' state? (Obviously, you knew not by an economic criterion, which you here advance as the only and sufficient criterion, but by a social and more particularly a political criterion - the workers had the power.) But let us grant the brief "exceptional" period, and charge it to the lags of history.

But we suddenly find: "Should a bourgeois counter-revolution succeed in Russia, the new government for a lengthly period would have to base itself upon nationalized economy." (My italics) What has become of our sole and sufficient criterion for judging the nature of the state? Why would not this new government be a workers' government, a form of the workers' state? It conforms absolutely to the definition of a workers' state given by Trotsky himself. How is this to be reconciled with the statement a few pages later: "However, so long as that contradiction has not passed from the sphere of distribution into the sphere of production, and has not blasted nationalized property and planned economy, the state remains a workers' state." In truth, they cannot be reconciled.

Trotsky, however, violating his logic, attempts a reconciliation, to explain how a bourgeois counter-revolution could rule on the basis of nationalized economy. "But what does such a type of temporary conflict between economy, and the state mean? It means a revolution or a counter-revolution..." But how, during the time, during the "lengthly period" when the nationalized economy still endures, do you know that a revolution or counter-revolution has taken place? Only by the change in the economy, (which has not taken place), according to your own criterion. But here we are once again in the circle. Do you know not by what has already happened, but by what the new state prepares to do, intends to do, what its direction and perspective is? But the present bureaucracy prepares the economic change, very clearly "intends" to consolidate a new class position, to destroy the nationalized economy; that is its direction and perspective; how then does it differ from the bourgeois counter-revolution in its early stages?

The logic of the Committee majority's position leads to a still more unacceptable conclusion. If it is true that nationalized economy is the sole and sufficient criterion of a workers' state, it then follows that the strength, extension and progress of nationalized economy is the sole and sufficient criterion of the strength, extension and progress of the workers' state. This was the view of many marxists, even members of the Left Opposition, at the time of the announcement of the First Five Year Plan. Reasoning from this premise, they considered it "inevitable" that the success, even the partial success,

of the Plan would automatically strengthen, extend and make for the progress of the workers' state. Events turned out quite differently. The workers' state, (that is, the form of society transitional between capitalism and socialism) was in point of fact greatly weakened and further degenerated during the period of the Plan, in spite of the great extension and expansion of the nationalized economy. This result cannot be explained on the basis of an acceptance of nationalized economy as a sole and sufficient criterion or condition of a workers' state. Such a basis can support only the Stalinist conclusion, not ours.

These consequences of the position of the Committee Majority constitute a reductio ad absurdum of that position. The only way to avoid them (as well as to rid our position on the Soviet State from its internal contradictions and its utter inadequacy in explaining actual events) is to abandon that position. This means, first of all, to recognize that nationalized economy is not a sole and sufficient criterion or condition of a workers' state; to understand that other factors must be taken into account. It means that we do not settle the question of the nature of the Soviet State by appeal to "definition", but examine concretely not merely the economic foundation, but the actual relation of the state apparatus to that economy, its relation, its actual, relation, to the working class, the position, the actual position, of the working class in the Soviet regime. Such an ~~examination~~ examination of evidence, not of definition - can lead only to the conclusion that within the Soviet Union the working class is not the ruling or dominant class, and that therefore the Soviet Union is not a workers' state.

Why Defend the Soviet Union?

The most frequently used argument of the Committee Majority against the Minority has been that our position, if logically carried out, leads to the advocacy of defeatist policies, and undermines the theoretical basis for the defensist policy which we jointly claim to uphold.

It should be observed that this argument is not of the slightest weight with reference to the question at issue. The great English philosopher, David Hume, once remarked: "There is no method of reasoning more common, and yet none more blameable, than, in philosophical disputes, to endeavor the refutation of any hypothesis, by a pretense of its dangerous consequences to religion and morality. When any opinion leads to absurdities, it is certainly false; but it is not certain that an opinion is false, because it is of dangerous consequence." If a correct analysis of the nature of the Soviet State leads us to defeatism, then we must change our policies, not our analysis.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the Minority does not lead to defeatism.

Why Should We Be for the Defense of the Soviet Union?

If we are defeatist, our position has nothing to do with whether or not we call the Soviet Union a "workers' state". Only a medicine man would base a policy on what things are called. We are defensists because we estimate that, in the light of the actual situation in the Soviet Union, the actual development there, such a policy is in the interests of the proletariat and of the world revolution.

We are for defense, primarily, because we - both of the Committee Majority and of the Committee Minority - consider that the socio-economic relations still obtaining in the Soviet Union are progressive, and are worth defending.

They are progressive for four major reasons:

1) Their origin is in the October Revolution, the first successful proletarian revolution. This is by no means a trivial point. A wage rise won by a successful strike is more progressive than a rise of the same amount handed down by the bosses to head off a strike.

2) The traditions and ideals of the Revolution, still carried - though forced far below the surface - in the hearts and minds of the Russian masses are bound up with the socio-economic relations.

3) These relations provide the indispensable foundation for a workers' state; that is, once the workers' state is reestablished, once the workers again make themselves the ruling class by ousting usurpers, they will be in a position to go forward decisively toward socialism without being forced to undertake a complete social and economic revolution. This is the precise focus of our positive policy: to reestablish the class rule of the workers. There is no other way to explain the meaning of the policies which we actually do advocate.

4) Most decisive of all in showing the necessity for a defensist policy is to compare the possible alternatives from the point of view of the workers' revolution - and this in general is how we decide whether we are "for" or "against" a policy. If the Soviet Union is defeated by an imperialist power, it will revert to the position of a semi-colonial nation (perhaps partly partitioned off into frank colonies) and the world revolution will be set back enormously. In the struggle against imperialism, the Soviet masses will have a genuine chance not merely to defeat the imperialist power (by itself progressive), but in the course of the struggle to cast off from their back the usurpers, regain class rule, and go triumphantly forward. The consideration of the alternatives leaves no doubt whatever that a defensist policy is mandatory, and this consideration alone suffices to refute all varieties of defeatists.

However, there is an ambiguity in the notion of "unconditional" defense of the Soviet Union. Events now make it necessary to point out certain distinctions which were formerly irrelevant. In reality, we stand for "unconditional defense of the revolution", and this imposes certain conditions on our defense of the Soviet Union. The first condition is the struggle against Stalinism, without which, in our opinion, revolutionary defense of the Soviet Union is impossible. Secondly, we must now recognize the possibility that the Soviet Union may engage in a reactionary war. (I have already mentioned how this might come about in connection with such events as those in Spain or China). In such cases, far from being for support or defense, we are for unconditional opposition to such a war. It is only when the war is itself progressive - e.g., against imperialism - that we are for defense; and in those conditions we are for unconditional defense.

Not all of the supporters of the Committee Majority will agree with these views on the problem of defense. Abern and Cannon, for example, have declared that any struggle in which the Red Army might be engaged would be, since it is the army of a workers' state, a progressive struggle, and therefore must be supported. They are, in my opinion, entirely

consistent in their reasoning. And this is only another example of why the entire position is false.

Well, then: What Kind of State?

In the first place, we cannot decide this question, as I have already shown, by identifying the state with the economy. In that case, the whole theory of the state becomes meaningless. Even comrade Trotsky is guilty here. After agreeing that the "state" is a "political category", he slips into the identification by repeating an aphorism: "However, this very politics is only concentrated economics." This aphorism, however illuminating when considered as a metaphor, is a most questionable step in an argument. We must decide what kind of state it is by analysing the relation of the political institutions (army, bureaucracy, GPU, courts, prisons) - that is, the state itself - to the economy and to the classes and social groups within the Soviet Union, and internationally.

By such an analysis we are trying to describe a very complicated set of events which are in a process of rapid change. Our description will, on that account, be at least partially inadequate and distorting (since it will suggest more finality than is to be found in the changing process itself), but it can be reasonably accurate. In such a description the Committee Minority can, it believes, come to virtually complete agreement with some of the supporters of the position of the Committee Majority.

From many points of view it would be well to stop with such a description, and to forebear at this time the attempt to sum the description up in a single formula, which, in the light of the rapidity of change now going on, is doomed to be misleading to one or another degree. This description is altogether adequate as a guide for action and for further understanding, and nothing more is really needed. To stop with the generalized description and to refuse to be tied down to scholastic formulas; that is how I understood the quotation from the REVOLUTION BETRAYED with which I began this article.

Our description will show us, in my opinion, beyond any doubt, that the Soviet Union is at the present time neither a bourgeois state nor a workers' state: That is, neither the working class nor a consolidated bourgeois class is the ruling or dominant class within the Soviet Union in any intelligible sense that can be given to the conception of a ruling or dominant class. Not a single piece of evidence to the contrary has been advanced in the current discussion.

This may surprise us, and may upset previously formed ideas; but history has a way of surprising us, and we must avoid acting like political ostriches. However, there is in general nothing unprecedented in such a conclusion. The cry of "revisionism" raised against us has no foundation in Marxist theory. Nothing whatever in the theory of the state limits types of states to "bourgeois" and "proletarian". For many years Lenin anticipated a state in Russia which would be a "dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry"; he may have been wrong, but no one attacked him as a revisionist for this conception of the state which was neither bourgeois nor proletarian. If he was wrong, he was so because things didn't turn out in that way, not because such a state is theoretically inconceivable. Not merely the possibility but the historical existence of states which were neither bourgeois nor feudal nor proletarian were frequently discussed and stated by Marx and Engels.

Engels definitely provided a place for a state which was in direct conflict with the economy - that is, for a state in which the ruling class was not the economically dominant class (how much more obviously he would have recognized this possibility in the case of nationalized economy which is not a form of economy giving property rights specifically to one class!) - cf., for example, his letter to Conrad Schmidt, October 27, 1890. Of course, such a state would be extremely unstable, and would not endure for long - "in (this) case nowadays the state power in every great nation will go to pieces in the long run..." (Loc. Cit.). But no one pretends that the present type of state in the Soviet Union will endure for epochs: it is above all characterized as unstable, transitory, in permanent crisis.

The specific analysis of various states, an analysis exact enough to enable us to work out correct policies, absolutely requires us to recognize "intermediary" forms of the state; it would be fatal to limit our "states" to feudal, bourgeois, and proletarian. How could we possibly handle the analysis, for example, of the English state from 1500 to 1832 with only these simple categories? Of course, looking back, we can see that during all that time the bourgeoisie by and large advanced, along with the advance and expansion of bourgeois economy. But such a general and after all abstract view would have been little use to the bourgeoisie in solving the complex problems of state power. And what was the U.S. Civil War fought over if not to destroy a coalition state (not a coalition government - the form of government was not changed), established under the constitution of 1787, and replace it by an unambiguous bourgeois state?

If I were forced to choose between the single alternative, bourgeois or proletarian, I should, unhesitatingly call the Soviet State bourgeois. At the present time the interests it primarily defends are bourgeois: the bourgeois interests within the mixed Soviet economy, and international bourgeois interests. Its defense of proletarian interests (unlike its function up to a few years ago) is now clearly secondary - though it may on occasion be none the less real for all that. But there is no reason whatever to make such a choice.

Is a single formula required? Very well: let all of us who agree on the description unite to agree on the clearest and most acceptable formula. In future history I think Comrade Carter is probably right in saying that it will be known as a "Stalinist state", distinguished as a specific state form; and there may be other examples of such a state in the future. If we look at the facts, and not at words, the most accurate formula is probably a "semi-bourgeois state" or an "embryonic bourgeois state". The Soviet State at present is primarily the instrument of the privileged strata of Soviet society - the bureaucracy, Army (particularly the upper ranks), the GPU, the richer collective peasants, the technicians, intellectuals, better paid Stakhanovites, etc.; and the instrument also of the sections of the international bourgeoisie toward which the State gravitates. Is this not the fact?

Is this a "no-class state"? Of course not. It is simply not, primarily, the instrument of the two major classes in contemporary society. But it is the instrument of the "new middle class" (striving to become a consolidated bourgeois class) within the Soviet Union itself; and it plays its own extremely important role in the international class struggle as a whole. Such a state, clearly, is to be expected to be most unstable, transitory, torn by crisis; and this is just

what we find. It should theoretically be expected to be in irreconcilable conflict with its own "economic foundations" (the conflict would not be irreconcilable if it were in truth a workers' state - any kind of workers' state); and this is certainly the case. It must go, or the economic foundation must go. And this must happen precisely because it is not a workers' state, but nevertheless has the economic foundation for a workers' state.

Only such explanation - whether or not put in just these terms - can provide us with a means for answering, without confusion or obscurantism or contradiction all of the major problems, both theoretical and practical, which the Soviet Union in the present stage of its development poses to the revolutionary movement. And, in addition, only such an approach can provide a proper basis for all of our specific policies - which, in my opinion, cannot be justified any longer on the basis of the view of the Committee Majority.

"A Question of Terminology"

It is doubtful whether any dispute which enters into the life of a political organization can ever retain a "purely scientific" character. At the Council of Nicea, the debate revolved apparently around a single letter in the word used to describe the Son of God; but the historically significant issue veiled by the words of the debate was the split between the Eastern and the Western Church. Our organization now, fortunately or unfortunately, is not debating merely the question whether the Soviet Union "is" a workers' state. We are also, in part at least, disputing over what kind of party we wish to form, and how we think it can best be built in the period ahead. The debate over the "Russian question" in part opposes, or tends to oppose, conflicting or partially conflicting tendencies within our organization.

From a scientific point of view, the question of whether or not the Soviet Union is a workers' state is to a considerable degree a "terminological question"; the question, namely, of what words are most suitable and useful in describing and communicating what we mean. This does not mean that, even from a purely scientific point of view, the question is trivial. Words are social in their functioning. It is necessary not merely that our ideas be correct in our own heads, but that we succeed in communicating them to others; the words we use make possible or impossible such communication; but the words are not our property but rather the property of the society in which we live. Words are one of the chief - perhaps the chief - instruments of revolutionary struggle. Therefore it is well to take them seriously.

The verbal habit which leads the Committee Majority to continue calling the Soviet Union a workers' state - and it is nothing more than a verbal habit - has become an obstacle to the progress of our movement. It stands in the way of the successful communication of our ideas to the masses. It begins to enshrine a bureaucratic conception of the road toward socialism, which, if solidified, will be fatal to the revolution. It defies economy in such a manner as to obscure the dialectical inter-relationship between economy and politics, and between both and psychology, intelligence and moral enthusiasm. It serves to justify in the minds of Stalinists and semi-Stalinists their slavishness to the bureaucracy - since do not even we tell them that after all the economy is "all". It drives independent thinking workers and intellectuals, who have broken with Stalinism, away from us and toward disillusion and defeatism; for we offer them an explanation in

words which, when interpreted as men normally interpret words, is manifestly false. It obscures in the minds of the masses the real goal which we propose to them. That goal, we must remember, is not a "nationalized economy". Cannon, and others among the Committee Majority, have been telling us, rather scornfully: Democracy! Democracy is merely an instrument... How much more fully must we realize, and make others realize, that nationalized economy is merely - an instrument. If not - then, Stalin is the better choice.

James Burnham

December 8, 1937

TO THE EDITORS OF "THE SOCIALIST APPEAL"

A Few Words About the Party Regime.

By L. Trotsky

During the past months I have received letters in regard to the inner regime of a revolutionary party from several apparently young comrades, unknown to me. Some of these letters complain about the "lack of democracy" in your organization, about the domineering of the "leaders" and the like. Individual comrades ask me to give a "clear and exact formula on democratic centralism" which would preclude false interpretations.

It is not easy to answer these letters. Not one of my correspondents even attempts to demonstrate clearly and concretely with actual examples exactly wherein lies the violation of democracy. On the other hand, insofar as I, a bystander, can judge on the basis of your newspaper and your Bulletins, the discussion in your organization is being conducted with full freedom. The Bulletins are filled chiefly by representatives of a tiny minority. I have been told that the same holds true of your discussion meetings. The decisions are not yet carried out. Evidently they will be carried through at a freely elected conference. In what then could the violations of democracy have been manifested? This is hard to understand. Sometimes, to judge by the tone of the letters, i.e., in the main instance by the formlessness of the grievances, it seems to me that the complainers are simply dissatisfied with the fact that, in spite of the existing democracy, they prove to be in a tiny minority. Through my own experience I know that this is unpleasant. But wherein is there any violation of democracy?

Neither do I think that I can give such a formula on democratic centralism that "once and for all" would eliminate misunderstandings and false interpretations. A party is an active organism. It develops in the struggle with outside obstacles and inner contradictions. The malignant decomposition of the Second and Third Internationals, under the severe conditions of the imperialist epoch, creates for the Fourth International difficulties unprecedented in history. One cannot overcome them with some sort of magic formula. The regime of a party does not fall ready-made from the sky but is formed gradually in the struggle. A political line predominates over the regime. First of all, it is necessary to define strategic problems and tactical methods correctly in order to solve them. The organizational forms should correspond to the strategy and the tactic. Only a correct policy can guarantee a healthy party regime. This, it is understood, does not mean the development of the party does not raise organizational problems as such. But this means that the formula for democratic centralism must inevitably find a different expression in the parties of different countries and in different stages of development of one and the same party.

Democracy and centralism do not at all find themselves in an invariable ratio to one another. All depends on the concrete circumstances, on the political situation in the country, on the strength of the party and its experience, on the general level of its members, on the authority which the leadership has succeeded in winning. Before a conference when the problem is one of formulating a political line for the next period, democracy triumphs over centralism. When the problem concerns itself with political action, centralism subordinates democracy to itself. Democracy again asserts its rights when the party feels the need to examine critically its own actions. The equilibrium between democracy and centralism establishes itself in the actual struggle, at moments it is violated and then again re-established. The maturity of each member of the party expresses itself particularly in the fact that he does not demand from the party regime more than it can give. He is a poor revolutionist who defines his attitude to the party on the individual fillips that he gets on the nose. It is necessary, of course, to fight against every individual mistake of the leadership, every injustice and the like. But it is necessary to estimate these "injustices" and "mistakes" not by themselves but in connection with the general development of the party both on a national and international scale. A correct judgement and a feeling for proportion in politics is an extremely important thing. He who has propensities for making a mountain out of a mole-hill can do much harm to himself and to the party. The misfortune of such people as Oehler, Field, Weisbord and others consists in their lack of feeling for proportion.

At the moment there are not a few half-revolutionists, tired out by defeats, fearing difficulties, aged young men who have more doubts and pretensions than will to struggle. Instead of seriously analyzing political questions in essence, such individuals seek panaceas, on every occasion complain about the "regime", demand wonders from the leadership, or try to muffle their inner scepticism by ultra-left prattling. I fear that revolutionists will not be made out of such elements, unless they take themselves in hand. I do not doubt, on the other hand, that the young generation of workers will be capable of evaluating the programmatic and strategical content of the Fourth International according to merit and will rally to its banner in ever greater numbers. Each real revolutionist who notes down the blunders of the party regime should first of all say to himself: "We must bring into the party a dozen new workers!" The young workers will call the gentlemen-sceptics, grievance-mongers, and pessimists to order. Only along such a road will a strong health party regime be established in the sections of the Fourth International.